

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Ann O'Brien and I am from Ridgefield, Connecticut. I am also the Director of Community Engagement & Co-sponsorship of [IRIS - Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services](#).

I am in full support, as is our organization, [IRIS](#), of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.

Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is a critical step to ensure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve.

As recent events unfolded with the fall of the Afghan government and the US military evacuating our Afghan ally families, we as a nation, our organization at IRIS and our 50+ community groups resettling these families across the state witnessed once again how critical it is for all immigrants to have recognized access to healthcare. Our communities across the country and in Connecticut stepped up by the 100's of thousands to help these families and our military did what we all in our hearts wanted to see happen -- saving as many children, mothers, and fathers as possible from certain death, bringing them to safety in the U.S. Then, our organization and communities across Connecticut had to handle the reality that these Afghan newcomers initially had no basis for access to healthcare. How could we help them if they were sick? The federal government moved swiftly to make healthcare accessible to this population, and we at the state level now have the chance to do the same for all immigrant children with this SB284. And we can do it!

At IRIS we handle these questions everyday and have been for decades, as we seek to connect immigrant families and children to healthcare services needed to stabilize their family. Immigrant children without no access to healthcare are so often unable to learn in school properly or are absent for significant lengths of time, as their families fear accessing care and losing their family's safety. Our case managers see daily these heart wrenching decisions by parents. Ultimately we all know, though, that not having access to primary and preventive care only costs us more as a society when these children become seriously ill and present at an emergency room.

SB284 not only is the right thing to do for all immigrant children, regardless of their country of origin (aren't we all just children of children from another country?) it is the smartest thing to do financially, with our limited resources as a society.

I applaud the State of Connecticut for the expansion of access to HUSKY to children ages 0 - 8 years last year and am in support S.B. 284 this year.

My thanks to this committee for it's tireless work to support and pass this legislation.

Thank you for your time and caring for ALL children, including immigrant children!

Regards,
Ann

Ann O'Brien

Director of Community Engagement & Co-Sponsorship

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